



PUBLIC TRANSIT IN WASHINGTON, DC

About Metro

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) was formed in 1967 to plan, develop, and operate a public transportation system in the national capital area. WMATA began building its rail system in 1969, acquired four regional bus systems in 1973, and began operating the first phase of Metrorail in 1976. Today, Metrorail serves 86 stations and has 106 miles of track. Metrobus serves the nation's capital 24 hours a day, seven days a week with 1,500 buses. In Washington, “Metro” usually refers the Metrorail subway system, not the bus.

Getting Around By Metro

Metrorail, known as Metro, is the most convenient and practical way to get around downtown Washington. Driving and parking near the National Mall area are difficult. Metro will take you almost anywhere you need to go in a reasonable amount of time.

A couple warnings are in order. For some destinations, you’ll need to do some walking. Trains run every few minutes during weekday rush hours, but less frequently on weekends and outside rush hours. On weekends, WMATA frequently closes sections of track for maintenance, forcing trains on that line to take turns using a single track.

You can find train schedules and estimate your travel time at www.wmata.com. Metro opens at 5 am on weekdays and 7 am on weekends. It closes at midnight on weeknights and 3 am on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Circulator

The Circulator buses are WMATA buses that cover many popular tourist destinations. There are 5 color-coded routes that serve the downtown area as well as Georgetown, the National Zoo, and Columbia Heights. The Circulator costs only \$1. Route maps can be found at www.dccirculator.com.

How to Pay

WMATA issues two kinds of fare cards: paper fare cards and plastic “SmarTrip” cards with an electronic chip. For the Metro, you can pay with either kind of fare card, but not cash. For buses, you can pay with SmarTrip or cash; paper fare cards are not accepted. Be forewarned: buses do not give change, so carry exact change.

The best way to pay for public transit is with a SmarTrip card: it’s fast, it’s rechargeable, and it works for buses or trains. The SmarTrip card costs \$2.50 and can be purchased from the sales office at Metro Center Station, from a vending machine at any Metrorail station that has parking facilities, or via WMATA’s website. Paying with SmarTrip saves you \$0.25 per trip on Metrorail and \$0.20 on Metrobus. You get an additional \$0.50 SmarTrip discount whenever you transfer from rail to bus.

You can also buy paper fare cards from vending machines at any Metro station. If your fare card has just a few cents left, you can swap it for a new one and retain the value. Simply stick your paper fare card into the vending machine slot where the new cards shoot out.

Fares

Metrorail fares vary depending on the distance you are traveling and the time of day. The base one-way fare is \$1.60 during off-peak hours and weekends, \$1.95 during rush hours, and \$2.15 during “peak-of-the-peak” hours. Fares are \$0.25 higher with paper fare cards. For most routes, the Metrobus fare is \$1.50 with SmarTrip or

\$1.70 with cash. Seniors and persons with disabilities receive a 50% discount on both rail and bus fares.

Destinations that are farther from Metro stations:

- **The Jefferson, Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Vietnam War, and Korean War Memorials:** Each of these memorials is 1 to 1.5 miles from Smithsonian Station, but the walk will give you an opportunity to take in the Mall and Tidal Basin area. The Lincoln Memorial is also about a mile from Foggy Bottom-GWU Station.
- **Georgetown:** From the Foggy Bottom-GWU Metro stop, it's a mile to the intersection of M Street and Wisconsin Avenue, the commercial center of Georgetown. You can also get there on the Circulator; you can board at Union Station, at several locations on K Street, or near the Foggy Bottom-GWU Metro stop.
- **The National Cathedral:** It's about a 25 minute walk from several stops on the Red Line (Woodley Park, Cleveland Park, and Tenleytown). Check www.wmata.com for bus schedules.
- **Mount Vernon:** Located 15 miles south of downtown Washington, Mount Vernon is inaccessible by public transit.

Getting To and From the Airports

Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) is just across the Potomac from downtown Washington. The Reagan Airport Metro Station is right outside the terminal. Keep in mind that Metro closes at midnight on weekdays and does not open until 7 am on weekends. There are also WMATA buses to DCA.

Thurgood Marshall Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) is 35 miles northeast of downtown Washington. There are three ways to get to and from BWI by public transit.

- The Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Train Service's Penn Line runs from BWI to Union Station in downtown Washington, where you can connect to Metro's Red Line. The MARC train takes about 40 minutes and costs \$6 each way. The last train leaves BWI each night at 9:31 pm. The first northbound train from Union station leaves at 5:54 am. As a commuter train, MARC does not run on weekends or holidays. For schedules, go to www.mtmaryland.com/services/marc.
- Bus service to and from BWI is available 7 days a week. WMATA's B30 bus runs from BWI to Greenbelt Metro Station, where you can connect with Metro's Green Line. The bus leaves every 40 minutes, costs \$6, and takes 30 minutes. Greenbelt is the last stop on this bus line, so don't worry about missing your stop. However, this doesn't always work for late-evening arrivals or early-morning departures. The last bus leaves BWI at 10:50 pm, 7 days a week. The first bus to BWI leaves Greenbelt at 6:10 am on weekdays and 8:45 am on weekends.
- On weekends, regular Amtrak trains serve the same route as MARC for a fare of \$10-\$34 each way. The first train leaves Union Station at 5:25 am and the last train leaves BWI at 11:59 pm. For exact schedules and fares, search www.amtrak.com using the station codes WAS for Union Station and BWI for the airport.

Dulles International Airport (IAD) is 30 miles west of downtown Washington. Until the planned Silver Line of Metro opens with light-rail service to Dulles, the only public transit options are buses.

- The 5A bus travels a loop from Dulles to the L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station in downtown Washington (the bus stops at D Street SW & 7th Street SW). It also connects with Metro at Rosslyn Station. The bus takes an hour, costs \$3.10, and leaves every 30-40 minutes. The first bus to Dulles leaves at 4:50 am on weekdays and 5:30 am on weekends. The last bus leaves Dulles at 11:40 pm, 7 days a week.
- The private Washington Flyer Coach (www.washfly.com/coach.html) connects Dulles Airport with West Falls Church Station on Metro's Orange Line. The bus takes 25 minutes, leaves every half-hour (on the 15 and 45 minutes), and costs \$10 one-way or \$18 round-trip. The first bus to Dulles leaves at 6:15 am on weekdays or 8:15 am on weekends. The last bus from Dulles leaves at 10:15 pm, 7 days a week.

Fare and schedule information may change at any time. Please check schedules on the transit agencies' websites when making travel plans. Updated December 2010.